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ABSTRACT

This report suggests that the goals of the 4-H youth programs in working in urban communities with inner-city young people are similar to those for rural area youth. They are: (1) to assist youth to understand his local community and the larger society, and to aid him in participating more effectively in community life; (2) to assist the youth to develop the tools necessary to aid in competent decision making; and (3) to help prepare the young person for his role in a democratic society. To meet these goals, program and staff development processes for servicing inner-city youth must be strengthened. These improvements will lead to improved staff acceptance of taking program risks (risk-taking is an inherent part of carrying out a balanced program) and increased communication of cultural values between the staff and youth clients. Alternatives for action are proposed. (JS)

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"PROGRAM BALANCE AND INNER CITY 4-H YOUTH PROGRAMS"*

by
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I am pleased with this opportunity to extend a most cordial welcome to you at the beginning of your conference on working with disadvantaged audiences in the urban environment. I want to discuss with you some of the factors involved in maintaining a positive educational role as we work in urban communities.

Yours is a most challenging opportunity as you consider effective ways of reaching the disadvantaged in the inner cities. You must use innovative methods and be willing to take some "high risk" chances. You must be sensitive to people--try to see situation "through their eyes" and "stand in their shoes" if you are to assist them by designing and conducting programs which will meet their needs. You must be bold in your leadership as you vary from the traditional and initiate new ways of reaching new audiences. You must be content with limited success yet cognizant of the real value of progress made even though not dramatic.

*Presentation at National Urban Workshop, National 4-H Center, October 4, 1971.

Both "A People and a Spirit" and "4-H in the 70's" have identified priority audiences, and have challenged us to carry out sound educational programs with these audiences. Our charge is to build mechanisms for assessing the needs of the disadvantaged, create a climate and expectancy of quality informal education with this clientele, and provide this audience with knowledge about how to participate effectively within society. We in Extension are responsible for building a knowledge base by integrating research and Extension program activities; we are to discover effective program mechanisms for getting this knowledge to the disadvantaged. It is these and similar considerations I wish to examine with you.

The responsibilities I mentioned did not begin just today, nor do they apply just to the urban disadvantaged audience. The Smith-Lever Act, passed in 1914 created Extension as an instrument of government for helping economically, socially, and educationally disadvantaged farm families. Though originally designed to help rural families catch up with those living in the city, the delivery system of Extension programs has such merit

that we have been asked to use it with those living in cities and metropolitan communities.

The current level of appropriated funds to carry out Extension programs is not adequate to the task of pursuing all possible educational goals with the completeness we desire, especially as these programs relate to urban areas. Even if we are successful in obtaining additional Federal funds to carry out an urban youth program, we will not have the professional resources needed to satisfactorily meet all of the educational needs of both rural and urban communities.

Are we then forced to choose to assist one or the other of these two important audiences as some have suggested? It seems to me that we need to balance our program so that programs offered are expanded to all segments of the society. "A People and a Spirit" has pointed to "priority clientele" who absolutely need our services: disadvantaged youth in urban ghettos, and in rural slums.

In considering program balance, we know that we cannot be all things to all people. We need to limit

the scope of program assistance, but the limitation should be in the range of program categories we make available, not in the variety of audiences served. We owe people this regardless of their ability to demand our assistance. In fact, as Extension educators, we have a professional responsibility of "helping people to know what there is to want," and "causing people to want what Extension has to offer." As public employees, we have an obligation to assure that all segments of society have "the right" to participate in Extension programs regardless of income and educational levels, and regardless of race, color, creed, sex, or national origin.

As we consider the opportunities and challenges in expanding 4-H youth programs to urban communities with emphasis on the inner-city, hard-to-reach young people, let me try to describe some of the attitudes and values many of us have toward these potential audiences.

Usually, most of us view life in these urban communities as a place where the major ills of our time converge and as a place which creates wasted human talent, alienation, apathy, and despair.

Ghettos are considered seedbeds of crime and poverty, and places where indolence, immorality, and laziness abound. The youth who live there are regarded as degraded, immoral, and given to useless behavior. Many reject these young people, and feel that they are beyond hope. The feeling is that, since they themselves cannot be saved, perhaps their children can be salvaged. The way that this is to be accomplished is to change the attitudes and motivations of the youth currently living in these communities, especially their willingness to remain in these depressed conditions. With such conditioning, when they reach adulthood they will leave the community, and raise their own children in more acceptable living areas.

There are others who see little opportunity to save those currently living in ghettos, or their offspring. Critics believe that inhabitants of these communities should be sealed tightly within their ghettos, and not given the opportunity to leave. It is felt that their presence in other communities would surely lead to an increase in crime, anti-social behavior, and a degradation of the general level of living.

Each of these analyses reflects a distinctive perspective. Perspectives are important indicators to understanding action in most cases, and they are especially significant for you who are change agents. The perspective that such a program person holds about specific situations determines the kind of definition of situation he constructs. Situational definitions are extremely important determinants of the program objectives the program person develops. The perspective that you as Extension workers hold about the nature of the city and its inhabitants will determine your program activities with them. For maximum effectiveness in program planning for central city audiences, it is important that we proceed from a suitable perspective.

In working with farm communities, Extension has attempted to bring those who are unable to provide the full range of social, economic and cultural services, back into the American mainstream. At no point was there a rejection of the community per se. Instead, each community was viewed as being able to supply these services, once they had received educational assistance from the Extension staff. There may be a number of us in this room who do not view the potential of urban

communities in this light. If the worker rejects the central city as a potential positive force in the life of youth living there, the program objectives that he devises, and the program actions in which he engages to reach these objectives may be inappropriate to the situation.

With assistance from Extension in States and localities the youth in various urban communities can begin to influence and improve the quality of social, economic and cultural benefits which those living in these neighborhoods seek so desperately. However, unless those of us in Extension design ways of incorporating some of their points of view into our program effort, and make these at least a part of our perspectives, how we define the problem, the educational objectives we set, indeed, the educational activities we carry out may be considered irrelevant by those we seek to serve.

The goals we seek to achieve with these audiences are really very similar to those we work to accomplish with youth living in rural areas. Stated briefly, they include:

(1) to assist the youth to understand his local community and the larger society, and to aid him to participate more effectively in the life of these communities;

(2) to assist the young person to develop the tools he needs to aid him in competent decision making; and

(3) to help prepare the young person for the role he will be called to play in a democratic society.

All of us attending this conference have aspirations of learning something that will help, as we plan, develop, and implement youth programs with central city and other urban youth. If our programs are to be meaningful, we need to be able to accept them as potentially competent problem-solvers. It will help greatly if we gain some understanding of the values they hold, and develop an empathy that allows us to regard their values and their behavior as serious attempts to make sense of the social reality of which they are a part.

There is an important leadership role we can carry out with urban youth, indeed, with all youth.

Research tells us that leadership is really not one-directioned, and it is not carried out by actor alone. In a group, this function may be held by different people, keyed especially to changes in tasks or task direction. The Extension youth specialist must be willing to turn some aspects of the program development process to those he serves.

One important task that must be performed is to establish the importance of the youth specialist assuming the role of collaborator and consultant in the youth behalf. Here, the leadership role should definitely be carried out by the youth specialist. After this role definition is established, the specialist and the youth involved can function as a planning team, whose goal is to assist the youth to plan, execute, and evaluate individual and group oriented tasks. In organizational terms this means that Extension must involve disadvantaged central city and other urban youth in the program planning, implementing and evaluation processes. These youth should be included in such operations at all levels of the organization, from the locality to the national level. These youth should be included in as many aspects of program planning and design as possible.

4-H in the 70's recommends that the youth program be conducted in cooperation with schools, churches and social agencies for youth. Young people in the inner city need to be able to make competent decisions on the interrelated problems of continuing their education, exploring career and professional possibilities and other major decisions. Extension 4-H programs in cooperation with others, can provide the solid resource backing that these young people need to determine how to make good personal decisions and how to work with others to accomplish socially acceptable purposes.

Some people in Extension have decided that all Extension urban programs should be carried out with disadvantaged youth. I suspect one of the reasons they make this decision is that they think central city is the whole metropolis, and that all persons in metropolitan areas are disadvantaged. Neither, of these, of course is true. A more accurate view would be that the central city is not a separate entity but has symbiotic and historical ties to the suburban areas that surround it. There are different audiences even in metropolitan areas. The balanced program approach requires us to give attention to the needs of suburban youth as well as central city, to poor youth in suburban areas and

to middle class youth in central cities.

I hope that you will consider several additional factors which are significant if we are to successfully expand our 4-H programs in urban areas.

Staff competencies and training needs differ so that guidelines for recruiting those to work in urban youth programs and conducting pre-service and in-service training for such workers must reflect these differences. It is hoped that this conference will assist staffs working with the disadvantaged urban audience in some of these operations.

In keeping with our desire to initiate innovative approaches to assist States with a balanced youth program, we at the National level are working closely with the National 4-H Center to provide staff development training that can aid youth workers to increase their professional skills. Such training activities will be based upon policy determinations made through the joint efforts of the ECOP 4-H Subcommittee, ECOP, the National 4-H Center and the ES - 4-H staffs.

The trend of using program assistants selected from low-income families has become well established especially in the Expanded Food and Nutrition Educational Program. The addition of this type of staff into an already established Extension staff system has not proceeded entirely smoothly. Just as we must find ways to assess the needs of our central city youth clientele, we must also make similar efforts in respect to these program assistants. Frequently their value systems, feelings of right or wrong, fair or unfair treatment, and other expectations differ from those of the professional staff. But like professionals, they want salary and status advancements, training opportunities and rewards for a job well done.

One of the most vital aspects of 4-H - Youth programs has been the enlistment and development of adult and older youth as volunteer leaders. I know that some of you working with the urban disadvantaged have encountered difficulties in recruiting these leaders. Perhaps we each need to re-examine some of the expectations we have about those who volunteer to perform the tasks we want

them to perform, their relation to the organization, and the nature of rewards we offer them. This concern deserves more than a quick answer. I encourage each of you to be creative in your recruitment, use, and recognition of volunteers. Work with volunteers gives you the opportunity to become the important catalyst to helping youth meet challenges and overcome difficulties.

To serve 7 million youth annually before the close of the decade as 4-H in the 70's recommends, each of you must increase your potential as a professional youth leader. You must individually and collectively provide the leadership we need to expand Extension youth programs. It will be up to you to continue the training gains you realize at this and similar National events, expanding them in conferences held at regional, State and local levels.

We must strengthen the program and staff development process for serving inner city youth. With these improvements, we can expect to see:

(1) Improved staff acceptance of taking program risks, since risk taking is an inherent part of carrying out a balanced program; and

(2) Increased communication of cultural values between the staff and youth clients; this will reduce some/the barriers that exist between the groups each thinking that the other is so "different" and increase the feeling among urban youth that Extension youth programs are relevant to their problem-solving activities.

Finally, let me challenge you with accepting the following alternatives for action:

1. Maintain a constant check on the aspirations, needs, and defined problems of disadvantaged urban youth so that you can continue to make programs relevant to their needs.

2. Work in conjunction with those inside and outside the Extension organization to make the recommendations included in 4-H in the 70's and A People and A Spirit realities.

3. Identify and eliminate myths that limit our Extension out-reach to disadvantaged urban youth.

4. Review both overt and hidden program action priorities so that the goals of a balanced program can be accomplished, and

5. Structure program planning advisory committees so that they include personnel that reflect the needs and interests of all Extension audiences.

In closing, let me assure you that we appreciate the good work that you are doing, and we wish to work closely with you in meeting the opportunities and challenges of working with the urban disadvantaged audience.

This urban workshop promises to add to your ability to meet the complex responsibilities which you have. I would hope that each of you will have the opportunity to share creative ideas here and then go home to implement these to meet the needs of young people living in urban communities.

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